

Brenda R. Gilbert
District Judge
Sixth Judicial District Court
414 East Callender
Livingston, MT 59047

March 31, 2016

Hon. Greg Todd
Redistricting Committee Chair
P.O. Box 35026
Billings, Montana 59107

Dear Judge Todd and Members of the Redistricting Committee

I am writing in response to the various proposals for redistricting that have been submitted to your committee. I appreciate the time and effort the members of your committee are devoting to issue of judicial resources affecting the district courts.

My greatest concern regarding the proposals is the limitation they will impose in terms of access to justice. Redrawing the judicial districts in the manner proposed will result in scheduling delays and a lengthier response time in general for the district courts affected. Juggling the law and motion calendars in three or four districts rather than two would have a considerable impact on scheduling other hearings and trials in a timely manner. Travel time for judges under many of the redistricting proposals would create inefficiency and further scheduling problems.

The redistricting proposals would also have the effect of decreasing, to a considerable degree, the opportunity for a voter to choose from a slate of judicial candidates with which they might be familiar. This would present a real change in many of the affected districts and dilutes the voice of the electorate in selecting judges.

During my short time on the bench, I have been impressed with the comity and efficiency involved in the district court judges helping each other with cases. I have never had the occasion to ask for help when it was not readily forthcoming. At the same time, I have never turned down a request to take a case except in a couple of instances where I had a conflict. I have significant concerns about the redistricting proposals having a negative impact

on the ability of the affected judges to help each other. This, in turn would present delays in access to the courts.

I have not spoken with any district court judge that does not share my support of the need for additional judicial resources in some of the districts that are overburdened with their caseloads. I do not believe that redistricting is a feasible way of resolving that issue.

Best regards,

Brenda R. Gilbert
District Judge
Sixth Judicial District